

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6093
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE
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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, BH, GT, UK
SUBJECT: PREMIER PRICE'S ADDRESS ON STATUS OF BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS

1. ON JAN 28, IN AN ADDRESS BILLED IN ADVANCE AS A MAJOR POLICY SPEECH, PREMIER GEORGE PRICE REVIEWED IN DETAIL THE PROGRESS OF RECENT NEGOTIATIONS RELATING TO THE UK-GUATEMALA DISPUTE, RESTATED AS BASIC, NON-NEGOTIABLE PRINCIPLES THE SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF BELIZE, REPORTED THAT THE UK WOULD CONTINUE SEEKING A SETTLEMENT THAT MIGHT STILL INCLUDE CESSION BUT NOTED THAT FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN HAD TOLD THE HOUSE OF COMMONS THAT NO SETTLEMENT WOULD BE ADOPTED WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF BELIZE AND HAD SAID THAT NO PRESSURE WOULD BE APPLIED TO OBTAIN THE LATTER'S APPROVAL. MEANWHILE, THE PREMIER NOTED, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY HAD SAID BRITAIN WOULD CONTINUE TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENT TO DEFEND BELIZE WHETHER OR NOT THE BELIZEAN PEOPLE ACCEPTED ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS PUT BEFORE THEM.

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2. FOLLOWING IS COMPLETE TEXT. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

MY FELLOW BELIZEANS,
I WOULD LIKE TO REPORT TO YOU ON THE PRESENT SITUATION REGARDING THE ANGLO-GUATEMALAN DISPUTE AFTER OUR TALKS IN LONDON EARLIER THIS WEEK.

NO AGREEMENT ON A SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED.
THE BELIZE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED ITS FIRM STAND ON
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND ON FULL SOVEREIGN INDEPENDENCE.
WE GOT THE RENEWED ASSURANCE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT
TO CONTINUE TO DEFEND BELIZE, AND WE MAINTAINED FRIENDSHIP
WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT FOR IT IS THE BRITISH WHO ARE
COMMITTED TO OUR DEFENSE. WE RECEIVED RENEWED ASSURANCE
FROM THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THAT IT WILL NOT GO AHEAD WITH
ANY KIND OF SETTLEMENT UNLESS SUCH SETTLEMENT IS ACCEPTABLE
TO OUR GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE.

IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO
REVEAL AT AN EARLIER DATE THE DETAILS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS
WHICH HAVE BEEN GOING OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS BECAUSE AS A
RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT WE WERE COMMITTED TO THE NORMAL
RULES OF KEEPING CONFIDENTIAL CERTAIN MATTERS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS.
TO DO OTHERWISE COULD HAVE ENDANGERED THE VERY SECURITY OF
BELIZE. WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT THIS CONFIDENCE WAS
REQUIRED BY THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE DEFENCE OF BELIZE. ONE WRONG STEP OR ONE IRRESPONSIBLE
WORD COULD LEAD TO BORDER INCIDENTS WHICH MUST BE AVOIDED
BECAUSE OUR FIRST CONCERN IS THE SAFETY OF OUR LAND AND ITS
PEOPLE.

YOU MUST KNOW ALSO THAT THE OPPOSITION UNITED
DEMOCRATIC PARTY WAS INFORMED ABOUT ALL THE PROPOSALS
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MADE AT THE THREE NEGOTIATION SESSIONS WITH GUATEMALA AND
THAT THEY WERE PRESENT AT TWO OF THESE MEETINGS INCLUDING
THE MOST RECENT ONE AT WASHINGTON IN JULY OF 1977. IT IS
IMPORTANT TO NOTE HERE THAT IT IS THE OPPOSITION WHO AT ONE STAGE
DECIDED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE NEGOTIATIONS.

IN ALL THESE NEGOTIATIONS, THE GOVERNMENT
MAINTAINED ITS LONG ESTABLISHED POLICY THAT IN SEEKING A
JUST AND HONORABLE SOLUTION TO THE DISPUTE THERE ARE TWO
POINTS OF PRINCIPLE WHICH ARE NOT NEGOTIABLE: THE FIRST
IS THE SOVEREIGNTY OF BELIZE AND THE SECOND IS THE TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY OR THE FIRM POLICY OF NOT GIVING AWAY ANY BELIZEAN
LAND.

THIS IS THE REASON WHY YOUR GOVERNMENT
HAS SPENT SO MUCH TIME AND EFFORT IN THE LAST TWO YEARS
ATTENDING MEETINGS AND GAINING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND
EXAMINING EVERY POSSIBLE AVENUE FOR A SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD
BE IN ACCORD WITH OUR TWO BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LAND AND
SOVEREIGNTY.

IN THE COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS, THE UNITED KINGDOM

AND GUATEMALA EXCHANGED VIEWS ON VARIOUS PROPOSALS OR IDEAS FOR A SETTLEMENT. IN ORDER TO HELP IN THESE DISCUSSIONS THESE PROPOSALS OR IDEAS WERE PUT IN THE FORM OF A DRAFT TREATY. THERE HAS BEEN NO AGREEMENT ON THESE PROPOSALS OR IDEAS; AND THE TREATY HAS NOT BEEN SIGNED BY ANYONE BECAUSE IT HAS NEVER BEEN AGREED TO.

THE PROPOSED DRAFT CONTAINS IDEAS AND PROPOSALS RELATING TO ECONOMIC COOPERATION, ON MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND CONSULTATIONS ON DEFENCE AND SECURITY. THERE WERE PROVISIONS FOR A NON-AGGRESSION PACT - THAT IS, WE WOULD NOT GO TO WAR WITH EACH OTHER. THERE WERE LIMITATIONS ON BELIZE'S RIGHT TO ENTER INTO MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES - THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS, BELIZE WOULD NOT SIGN MILITARY PACTS WITH COUNTRIES WHICH DIFFER FROM OUR DEMOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE. GUATEMALA WAS OFFERED A SEAWARD BOUNDARY TO PROVIDE HER WITH A GUARANTEED ACCESS TO THE HIGH SEAS THROUGH HER OWN TERRITORIAL SEA. THIS WOULD GIVE UP TERRITORIAL SEA WHICH AT PRESENT DOES NOT BELONG TO BELIZE.

IN THE SAME PROPOSED DRAFT TREATY THERE WERE PROVISIONS FOR THE USE OF EACH OTHER'S PORT FACILITIES AND FOR THE USE OF GOOD ROAD ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES BY FREE TRANSIT OF NON-MILITARY VEHICLES, SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT. IT WAS FURTHER PROPOSED THAT BELIZE BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, THAT BELIZE ACCEDE TO THE RIO TREATY AND ENTER INTO ECONOMIC AND TRADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH CENTRAL AMERICA. ALL THESE PROPOSALS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH OUR EXISTING COMMITMENTS TO THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY. OTHER PROPOSALS INCLUDE JOINT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND A JOINT DEVELOPMENT FUND.

I REPEAT THAT THESE ARE ALL SUGGESTIONS, PROPOSALS, IDEAS AND THAT NO FINAL AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED.

A SETTLEMENT OF THE CLAIM IS ESSENTIAL FOR ORDERLY AND PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND FOR CONTINUED PROGRESS TO A SAFE AND SECURE INDEPENDENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE PEOPLE OF BELIZE CANNOT CONTINUE TO LIVE UNDER CONSTANT THREATS, FEARS AND INSECURITY CAUSED BY THE UNFOUNDED GUATEMALAN CLAIM TO OUR LAND.

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THE SECURE INDEPENDENCE OF BELIZE WITH
ALL ITS TERRITORY HAS BEEN AN OBJECTIVE
ENDORSED BY THE PEOPLE IN SIX SUCCESSIVE NATIONAL ELECTIONS.
IN 1974 - THREE YEARS AGO - BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES WENT TO
THE PEOPLE WITH ELECTION MANIFESTOES SUPPORTING THE
INDEPENDENCE OF BELIZE. THE ONLY OBSTACLE TO ACHIEVING
THIS OBJECTIVE IS THE GUATEMALAN THREAT, AND THIS
THREAT WILL NOT GO AWAY BY ITSELF. IT IS OUR SACRED
RESPONSIBILITY AS A GOVERNMENT HAVING A MANDATE FROM
THE PEOPLE, TO SEEK AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MUST ALSO
ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY TO ACHIEVE THIS SETTLEMENT.
THAT IS WHY FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS WE HAVE COOPERATED WITH
THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT IN SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATED
SETTLEMENT WHICH WILL ALLOW BELIZE TO MOVE ON TO INDEPENDENCE
IN PEACE AND SECURITY.

OVER THE PAST TWENTY SEVEN YEARS WE HAVE WORKED AND
CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARD THIS OBJECTIVE.
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TWENTY SEVEN YEARS IS A LONG SPAN IN A LIFE TIME. SO IT
IS NO SUDDEN IMPULSE OR MAD RUSH TO INDEPENDENCE REGARDLESS
OF THE CONSEQUENCES. REAL AND EFFECTIVE SECURITY IS
BASIC TO OUR MOVE TO INDEPENDENCE. THIS IS A COMMITMENT

BY WHICH WE STAND.

FROM THE BEGINNING WE KNEW THAT TO
ACHIEVE A SECURELY INDEPENDENT BELIZE WITH SOVEREIGNTY
OVER ALL ITS TERRITORY IS NOT AN EASY TASK. IT IS A
TASK FOR GIANTS.

WE PROPOSE TO DO THIS DIFFICULT TASK
EITHER OF TWO WAYS. ONE IS BY A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.
THE OTHER IS TO GET A SECURITY ARRANGEMENT WITH THE
UNITED KINGDOM ALONE OR WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM AND
OTHER COUNTRIES.

IN OUR INTERNATIONAL WORK TO ATTAIN THIS
OBJECTIVE WE HAVE WON STRONG SUPPORT FROM THE COMMONWEALTH
HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, FROM THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY, FROM
THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND FROM THE UNITED NATIONS FOR
THE SECURE INDEPENDENCE OF BELIZE WITH ITS TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF STRONG INTERNATIONAL
SUPPORT THERE WERE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN
THE UNITED KINGDOM AND GUATEMALA. AT THE THREE MEETINGS,
TO WHICH I REFERRED EARLIER IN THIS ADDRESS: ONE IN NEW
ORLEANS, ONE IN PANAMA CITY AND ONE IN WASHINGTON - OUR
GOVERNMENT STOOD FIRMLY ON THE UNITED NATIONS AND
COMMONWEALTH RESOLUTIONS.

SINCE THE WASHINGTON MEETING THE
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BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HAVING DISCUSSIONS WITH GUATEMALA
WHICH DISCUSSIONS IMPLY A POSSIBLE LAND CESSION OR GIVING LAND
AS A MEANS OF SETTLEMENT. THESE DISCUSSIONS COVERED
VARIOUS PROPOSALS REFERRING TO AREAS BOUNDED BY RIVERS -
FROM THE MONKEY RIVER TO THE TEMASH RIVER AND
TO AREAS BOUNDED BY LINES DRAWN ON A MAP OF SOUTHERN
BELIZE WHICH INCLUDE CONTINENTAL SEA SHELF, SEA BED,
AND SOME OF THE SOUTHERN CAYES.

A PROPOSAL WHICH THE BRITISH BELIEVE MIGHT
PROVIDE A SETTLEMENT IS AN AREA, WHICH I ESTIMATE TO BE
ABOUT ONE THOUSAND SQUARE MILES MADE UP OF ABOUT THREE HUNDRED
SQUARE MILES OF MAINLAND SOUTH OF THE MOHO RIVER AND ABOUT 600
TO 700 SQUARE MILES OF CONTINENTAL SEA SHELF, SEA BED AND CAYES
FROM RANGUANA SOUTHWARDS. THIS INFORMATION I GAVE TO THE
LONDON PRESS CONFERENCE ON JANUARY 25TH WHEN ASKED WHAT
WAS THE LAND PROPOSAL UNDER PRESENT CONSIDERATION.

IN NOVEMBER, OF LAST YEAR, I WAS INFORMED

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE ABOUT THESE DISCUSSIONS
ABOUT GIVING UP LAND; AND AS THE FOREIGN SECRETARY HAS
CONFIRMED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, I PROTESTED AND REAFFIRMED
THE DETERMINATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE TO MAINTAIN THE
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF BELIZE. THIS WAS
DURING THE TIME THAT WE WERE WORKING AT THE UNITED
NATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE RESOLUTION IN FAVOR OF THE
SECURE INDEPENDENCE OF BELIZE WITH ALL ITS PRESENT TERRITORY.
THIS RESOLUTION WAS PASSED IN THE UNITED NATIONS BY AN
OVERWHELMING VOTE IN OUR FAVOR.

ABOUT THIS SAME TIME I WAS INFORMED BY
HIGH OFFICIALS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA THAT THEY WERE AWARE OF THE PROPOSALS FOR CEDING
BELIZEAN LAND TO GUATEMALA. SUBSEQUENTLY I WAS ALSO
INFORMED BY AN OFFICIAL OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT THAT THE
UNITED STATES IS NOT ADVOCATING ANY ONE TYPE OF SOLUTION
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TO THE PROBLEM, BUT THAT IT BELIEVES THAT ANY SOLUTION HAS
TO INVOLVE LAND CESSION.

AS A RESULT OF THIS INFORMATION IN OUR
POSSESSION, BY COLLEAGUES AND I WHO ADVISE ON EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS CONTACTED COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, THE
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES INFORMING THEM OF OUR STRONG
OPPOSITION TO GIVING AWAY LAND AND ASKING FOR THEIR HELP.

THESE DEVELOPMENTS CAME TO A HEAD IN
LONDON ON JANUARY 24 AND 25, OF THIS YEAR, WHEN THE FOREIGN
SECRETARY, DOCTOR OWEN, DISCUSSED WITH US THE UNITED
KINGDOM'S VIEW OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A SETTLEMENT BASED
ON LAND CESSION.

WE AGAIN MAINTAINED OUR POSITION ON NO LAND
CESSION, BUT RATHER THAN CAUSING A BREAKDOWN IN THE TALKS
AND ENDANGERING THE SAFETY OF BELIZE, WE ASKED THAT NEGOTIATION
SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE HOPE OF FINDING A SOLUTION THAT
WOULD ACHIEVE A SECURE INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE WITH ITS
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. WE PLACE IN FIRST ORDER OF IMPORTANCE
THE SECURITY OF BELIZE.

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IN SUMMING UP THESE ARE THE MAIN POINTS OF THE LONDON TALKS:

1. THERE WAS NO AGREEMENT ON A SETTLEMENT.
2. THE BELIZE GOVERNMENT STOOD FIRM ON THEIR POLICY OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND REJECTED THE IDEA OF ANY LAND CESSION.
3. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY NOTED THE POSITION OF BELIZE BUT MAINTAINED THAT THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTINUE THE SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE LAND CESSION, DESPITE OUR OPPOSITION TO GIVING AWAY LAND. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HOWEVER GAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT NO AGREEMENTS WOULD BE MADE WHICH WERE NOT SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE BELIZEAN PEOPLE.
4. I REQUESTED THAT ANY PROPOSALS WHICH THE BRITISH WISHED TO SUPPORT SHOULD BE PUT DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE OF BELIZE IN SOME FORM OF REFERENDUM, PLEBISCITE OR CONSULTATION, AND THAT THE COMMONWEALTH SHOULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCESS

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OF CONSULTATION. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AGREED TO BOTH THESE REQUESTS. THIS MEANS THAT YOU THE BELIZEAN PEOPLE WILL HAVE A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY TO DECIDE ON ANY DEFINITE PROPOSALS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE. IN THIS CONNECTION YOU WILL WISH TO NOTE THAT DR. OWEN HAS STATED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS THAT WHEN THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT FEELS THERE IS A PROPOSAL WHICH THE PEOPLE OF BELIZE SHOULD CONSIDER, IT

WILL BE PUT TO THEM. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL THEN MAKE A RECOMMENDATION, BUT HE HAS UNDERTAKEN THAT THERE WILL BE NO PRESSURE FROM THE BRITISH. THE CHOICE WILL BE FREE.

5. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, AGREED THAT BRITAIN WILL CONTINUE TO HONOR ITS DEFENCE COMMITMENT WHETHER OR NOT THE PEOPLE OF BELIZE AFTER CONSULTATION DECIDE AGAINST ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS. SO MUCH FOR THE LONDON TALKS.

MY FELLOW BELIZEANS, THE ROAD AHEAD IS NOT EASY, NOR IS IT CLEAR. A SETTLEMENT BASED ON LAND CESSION OR ON EROSION OF SOVEREIGNTY IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO OUR GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME WE MUST REALIZE THAT UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MAINTAIN THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO PURSUE ANY COURSE WHICH THEY BELIEVE WOULD RESULT IN A SECURELY INDEPENDENT BELIZE. OUR SAFEGUARD, IS THAT THEY HAVE PROMISED TO CONSULT THE PEOPLE OF BELIZE BEFORE AGREEING TO ANY SUCH SETTLEMENT.

WITHOUT A SETTLEMENT BELIZEANS WILL CONTINUE TO LIVE UNDER THE CONSTANT THREAT OF GUATEMALAN AGGRESSION, PROPAGANDA AND SUBVERSION. FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY WILL PREVAIL, DEVELOPMENT WILL BE RETARDED AND INSTABILITY WILL BE THE ORDER OF THE DAY. GUATEMALA WILL HAVE MORE TIME TO DEVELOP ITS MILITARY MACHINE AND TO WIN OVER MORE TRAITORS.

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BUT LET US NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE TREMENDOUS SUPPORT THAT BELIZE HAS GAINED OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS. WORLD OPINION IS ON THE SIDE OF BELIZE. WITH CONTINUED STRUGGLE AND DEDICATION TO THE IDEALS OF OUR PEACEFUL, CONSTRUCTIVE BELIZEAN REVOLUTION, WE WILL FIND A WAY TO SETTLE THIS DISPUTE - WHICH WE HAVE INHERITED AND WHICH IS OLDER THAN ALL OF US - AND AT THE SAME TIME TO PRESERVE OUR BASIC RIGHTS. WE MUST CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE TO ADVANCE. FOR IN CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IF A COUNTRY DOES NOT GO FORWARD, IT TENDS TO GO BACKWARD.

WHILE WE DO OUR VERY BEST TO MAINTAIN OUR POSITION ON NO LAND CESSION, OUR TASK IS MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY VOICES OPPOSED TO OUR GOVERNMENT WHICH SPEAK AT HOME AND ABROAD IN FAVOR OF LAND CESSION AND BY VOICES WHICH USE RUMOR AND SPECULATION AND FALSEHOOD TO TRY TO UNDERMINE OUR GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OUR GOVERNMENT IS AGAINST GIVING AWAY LAND AND DEGRADING ITS SOVEREIGNTY.

DESPITE THIS ADVERSITY, LET US REMAIN CALM AND RESOLUTE AS WE CONTINUE TO BUILD THIS NEW NATION AND PRESERVE ITS HERITAGE OF LAND FROM THE RIO HONDO TO THE RIVER SARSTOON.

AS WE BUILD WE OFFER THE HAND OF FRIENDSHIP TO LIVE IN PEACE AND
HARMONY WITH ALL OUR NEIGHBORS OF THE AMERICAS AND WITH THE
PEOPLES OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

LET US UNITE TO SAVE BELIZE. THIS SHOULD NOT
BE DIFFICULT, FOR DEEP DOWN IN OUR HEARTS WE MUST BE
ONE PEOPLE WITH A FIRM WILL TO PRESERVE ALL OUR LAND AND
TO BE FREE AND FULLY SOVEREIGN.

WE PRAY TO THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE THAT WE DO NOT
BUILD IN VAIN BUT WITH HIS DIVINE HELP AND
TOGETHER AS A WELL-DESERVING PEOPLE WE BUILD THE NEW NATION
OF BELIZE UNDIVIDED AND SECURE IN ITS INDEPENDENCE.

END TEXT.

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Message Attributes

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